

TESTIMONY BY

DR. MICHAEL F. ADAMS

PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES SENATE

APRIL 26, 2001

IN REGARD TO

S. 718 – THE AMATEUR SPORTS INTEGRITY ACT

CHAIRMAN MCCAIN, SENATORS HOLLINGS, BROWNBACK, CLELAND AND OTHER DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, I AM MICHAEL ADAMS, PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA. I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR HOLDING THIS HEARING, AND FOR INVITING ME TO SHARE MY VIEWS ON THE TOPIC OF GAMBLING ON COLLEGE SPORTS. THIS IS A MATTER OF CONSIDERABLE CONCERN TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA AS WELL AS THE REST OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMUNITY AND WE WELCOME THE INTRODUCTION OF S. 718 AS A MEANS OF ADDRESSING THESE CONCERNS.

FIRST LET ME SAY THAT I SUPPORT TITLE I OF THE LEGISLATION WHICH CALLS FOR RESEARCH AND TRAINING IN THE METHODS OF DETECTING PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING DRUGS. AUTHORIZING THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STANDARDS AND TECHNOLOGY TO SPONSOR PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PROGRAMS IS A POSITIVE STEP TO DISCOURAGE USE OF THE SUBSTANCES BY AMATEUR ATHLETES. HOWEVER, I WOULD LIKE TO DEVOTE THE BULK OF MY TESTIMONY TO TITLE II OF THE BILL, WHICH FOCUSES ON GAMBLING.

ATHLETICS ARE AN INTEGRAL COMPONENT OF THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE. THE LINK BETWEEN MENTAL AND PHYSICAL WELL-BEING IS A WELL ESTABLISHED FACT. INVOLVEMENT IN ATHLETICS PROVIDES AN IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY TO FOSTER TEAM BUILDING AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS AMONG STUDENTS, AND TO TEACH VALUABLE LIFE LESSONS ABOUT

HARD WORK, DEDICATION AND ETHICAL BEHAVIOR. COLLEGES ENDEAVOR TO PROVIDE AS MANY AVENUES AS POSSIBLE FOR STUDENTS TO ENGAGE IN ATHLETIC PURSUITS IN BOTH INTRAMURAL AND EXTRAMURAL SETTINGS. FOR A RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBER OF YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN, PARTICIPATION IN COLLEGE SPORTS AFFORDS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHOWCASE THEIR EXTRAORDINARY ATHLETIC GIFTS, AND FOR AN EVEN SMALLER HANDFUL, IT WILL LEAD TO A CAREER AS A PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE.

FROM THE ROAD TO THE FINAL FOUR CHAMPIONSHIPS FOR MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAMS, TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA'S PACKED SANFORD STADIUM ON A CRISP AUTUMN AFTERNOON, TO THE FAST-PACED COMPETITION OF WOMEN'S SOCCER, COLLEGE SPORTS ARE ENJOYED BY MILLIONS OF AMERICAN SPECTATORS. THE HOPES AND DREAMS OF THE YOUNG ATHLETES AND OUR PRIDE IN OUR INSTITUTIONS ARE THE INGREDIENTS THAT MAKE THESE CONTESTS RIVETING. THIS IS THE POINT OF THE GAMES. THIS IS WHAT MAKES THEM ENJOYABLE. GAMBLING ON THE OUTCOME OF THESE GAMES IS NOT ONLY UNNECESSARY, IT HAS ENORMOUS POTENTIAL TO COMPROMISE THE INTEGRITY OF THE AMATEUR SPORTS TRADITION.

GAMBLING ON COLLEGE STUDENT-ATHLETES AND THE GAMES THEY PLAY, WHETHER DONE LEGALLY IN THE SPORTS BOOKS OF NEVADA, ILLEGALLY IN ANY OTHER STATE, OR ON THE INTERNET, IS A GROWING PROBLEM. GAMBLING ON COLLEGE SPORTING EVENTS SHOULD BE PROHIBITED IN ALL STATES, AS IS NOW DONE FOR HIGH SCHOOL AND OLYMPIC CONTESTS. I COMMEND THE CHAIRMAN, TOGETHER WITH SENATORS BROWNBACK, EDWARDS, AND JEFFORDS, FOR INTRODUCING S. 718 TO ADDRESS THIS PROBLEM.

CONGRESS FIRST RECOGNIZED THE POTENTIAL FOR PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH GAMBLING ON AMATEUR SPORTING EVENTS A DECADE AGO. IN 1992, PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH SIGNED INTO LAW THE PROFESSIONAL AND AMATEUR SPORTS PROTECTION ACT (PASPA) TO PROHIBIT GAMBLING ON MOST SPORTING EVENTS. PASPA EXEMPTED FOUR STATES THAT

ALREADY CONDUCTED, OR HAD ENACTED LEGISLATION THAT PERMITTED THEM TO CONDUCT SPORTS GAMBLING WITHIN THEIR BORDERS. AT THAT TIME, NEVADA WAS THE ONLY STATE WHERE LEGAL GAMBLING ON HIGH SCHOOL, COLLEGE, AND OLYMPIC SPORTING EVENTS WAS PERMITTED. TODAY, NEVADA STANDS ALONE AS THE ONLY STATE IN THE NATION THAT LEGALLY OPERATES A SPORTS BOOKS ON COLLEGE ATHLETIC CONTESTS. WITH THE BENEFIT OF HINDSIGHT, IT IS APPARENT THAT THE GRANTING OF THAT EXEMPTION WAS UNWISE.

IN THE INTERVENING YEARS SINCE THE ENACTMENT OF PASPA, NEVADA HAS MADE SOME CHANGES IN ITS LEGALLY SANCTIONED ACTIVITIES THAT BESPEAK AN AWARENESS THAT GAMBLING ON YOUNG, AMATEUR ATHLETES IS INDEFENSIBLE. FOR EXAMPLE, UNTIL LAST YEAR NEVADA GAMING REGULATIONS PROHIBITED GAMBLING ON NEVADA COLLEGE TEAMS, WHETHER THEY PLAYED AT HOME OR OUTSIDE THE STATE. IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST LAST FEBRUARY FROM THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION (NCAA) THAT OTHER TEAMS BE EXTENDED THE SAME EXEMPTION, THE STATE GAMING CONTROL BOARD REVERSED ITS LONGSTANDING POLICY AND NOW PERMITS BETTING ON NEVADA TEAMS. IN ANOTHER EXAMPLE – PERHAPS FUELED BY THE PRECURSOR TO S. 718 AND THE ATTENDANT MEDIA SCRUTINY -- THE CONTROL BOARD RECENTLY HAS BANNED BETTING ON HIGH SCHOOL AND OLYMPIC CONTESTS. THIS ACTION PLACES NEVADA ON A PAR WITH OUR OTHER 49 STATES IN REGARD TO PROTECTING HIGH SCHOOL AND OLYMPIC ATHLETES, BUT IT RAISES A PERPLEXING QUESTION ABOUT THE DISTINCTION THAT WAS MADE. WHY ARE SOME YOUNG PLAYERS AND THEIR SPORT DEEMED WORTHY OF SAFEGUARDING WHILE OTHERS IN A SIMILAR AGE COHORT ARE NOT? NEVADA’S SMALL STEPS TO UNDERTAKE DAMAGE CONTROL CLEARLY ARE INADEQUATE.

OVER THE YEARS THAT NEVADA HAS BEEN ACCORDED ITS EXEMPTION, AMPLE EVIDENCE HAS ACCUMULATED THAT THE EXISTENCE OF NEVADA’S LEGAL SPORTS BOOKS HAS HAD A CORRUPTING INFLUENCE THAT TAINTS THE ENVIRONMENT

FOR INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS, AND FOSTERS A GENERAL CLIMATE OF DISRESPECT FOR OUR LAWS. SUPPORT FOR THIS POINT OF VIEW IS DERIVED FROM THE WORK OF THE NATIONAL GAMBLING IMPACT STUDY COMMISSION. THIS COMMISSION, COMPRISED OF BIPARTISAN MEMBERS APPOINTED BY PRESIDENT CLINTON AND THE LEADERSHIP OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE ISSUED ITS RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CONGRESS IN JUNE OF 1999. A KEY FINDING OF THE COMMISSION WAS THAT "SPORTS WAGERING THREATENS THE INTEGRITY OF SPORTS, IT PUTS STUDENT ATHLETES IN A VULNERABLE POSITION, [AND] IT CAN DEVASTATE INDIVIDUALS AND CAREERS." TO ADDRESS THIS, THE COMMISSION URGED THAT THE "BETTING ON COLLEGIATE AND AMATEUR ATHLETIC EVENTS THAT IS CURRENTLY LEGAL BE BANNED ALTOGETHER." THE COMMISSION ALSO HIGHLIGHTED THE CONNECTION BETWEEN NEVADA'S LEGAL BETTING ENTERPRISE AND THE ILLEGAL WAGERING THAT GOES ON ELSEWHERE. THE REPORT STATES THAT: "ONE REASON AMERICANS MAY NOT BE AWARE OF THE ILLEGALITY OF SPORTS WAGERING IS THAT THE LAS VEGAS 'LINE' OR POINT SPREAD, IS PUBLISHED IN MOST OF THE 48 STATES WHERE SPORTS WAGERING IS ILLEGAL." I WOULD LIKE TO PUT THESE ISSUES INTO CONTEXT AS THEY RELATE TO COLLEGE ATHLETES AND TO COLLEGE STUDENTS.

FIRST, THE IMPACT OF GAMBLING ON COLLEGIATE ATHLETES. IT IS EASY TO STAND AMONG THESE YOUNG PLAYERS, MANY OF WHOM TOWER ABOVE THE REST OF US, OR TO WITNESS THEIR STRENGTH AND PHYSICAL PROWESS ON THE FIELD OR THE COURT AND TO EQUATE THEM WITH THE ADULT COMPETITORS OF PROFESSIONAL SPORTS. IT IS EASY TO FORGET THAT OVERWHELMINGLY THESE INDIVIDUALS ARE TEENAGERS. THESE ARE YOUNGSTERS TAKING THEIR FIRST STEPS TOWARD ADULTHOOD, STILL LACKING IN MATURITY AND SOPHISTICATION. IN CONTRAST TO THEIR WELL-PAID COUNTERPARTS IN THE RANKS OF PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES, THEY HAVE NO INDEPENDENT MEANS OF SUPPORT. FOR THESE REASONS, STUDENTS HAVE A PARTICULAR VULNERABILITY TO FINANCIAL ENTICEMENTS FROM PREDATORY INDIVIDUALS SEEKING TO INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME OF A SPORTING EVENT. ALTHOUGH THEY ARE STATISTICALLY INFREQUENT, SEVERAL

HIGH-PROFILE GAMBLING-RELATED INCIDENTS HAVE OCCURRED INVOLVING STUDENT ATHLETES IN THE LAST DECADE. IF THE AMOUNT OF MONEY LEGALLY WAGERED ON COLLEGE SPORTS IS ALLOWED TO ESCALATE, THE PRESSURES ON THESE YOUNG ATHLETES TO PROVIDE INSIDE INFORMATION ON THE TEAM OR TO SHAVE POINTS AND FIX GAMES IS BOUND TO INCREASE AS WELL.

IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT THE OPERATIVE WORD IN THE 1992 LEGISLATION IS “PROTECTION.” WOULD WE EVEN BE HERE THIS MORNING DEBATING THE EFFICACY OF S. 718 IF WE WERE DISCUSSING HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETES? WHY SHOULD THE PERIOD BETWEEN LEAVING HIGH SCHOOL AND ENTERING COLLEGE DEPRIVE COLLEGE ATHLETES FROM THE PROTECTION THAT COVERED THEM A MERE THREE MONTHS EARLIER?

NOW TO MY SECOND POINT – THE IMPACT OF GAMBLING ON THE GENERAL STUDENT POPULATION. THERE IS A GROWING BODY OF SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE THAT SAYS GAMBLING AMONG THE NATION’S YOUTH IS ON THE RISE AND IS OCCURRING AT EARLIER AND EARLIER AGES. A GALLUP POLL TAKEN TWO YEARS AGO FOUND THAT TEENAGERS SAY THEY BEGIN BETTING ON SPORTS AT AGE 10. IN ADDITION, THE POLL FOUND THAT TEENAGERS ENGAGED IN BETTING AT TWICE THE RATE OF THE ADULT SURVEY RESPONDENTS, 18 PERCENT TO 9 PERCENT. SEVERAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO THIS BEHAVIOR. FIRST, ANYONE WITH ACCESS TO A NEWSPAPER CAN LOOK UP THE POINT SPREADS ON THEIR CHOICE OF COLLEGE SPORTING EVENTS. TO MY KNOWLEDGE, ONLY THE NEW YORK TIMES AND THE WASHINGTON POST HAVE ADOPTED A POLICY AGAINST PUBLICATION OF THE POINT SPREADS. SECOND, THE PUBLICATION OF THE POINT SPREADS GIVES AN IMPRIMATUR OF LEGITIMACY TO WAGERING ON COLLEGE CONTESTS. THIRD, THE FACILITY WITH WHICH THE YOUNGER GENERATION USES THE INTERNET AND THE PROLIFERATION OF INTERNET GAMBLING SITES PERPETUATES THE NOTION THAT THIS IS A LEGITIMATE ACTIVITY, AND ENCOURAGES EASE OF ACCESS. BUT FOR THE EXISTENCE OF THE NEVADA SPORTS BOOKS, ILLEGAL GAMBLING WOULD NOT

BE AS PROFITABLE, AS PERVASIVE, NOR AS SEDUCTIVE TO YOUNG PEOPLE – MANY OF WHOM HAVE LITTLE AWARENESS THAT IT IS AN ILLEGAL ACTIVITY OUTSIDE OF NEVADA.

THE NATION’S COLLEGES ARE MINDFUL OF THE RESPONSIBILITIES WE BEAR IN HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE BECOME RESPONSIBLE ADULTS. OUR OBLIGATIONS START FIRST AND FOREMOST WITH CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE ETHICAL CHOICES AND GOOD CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT CAN FLOURISH. THIS TASK IS MADE CONSIDERABLY MORE DIFFICULT WHEN OUR CAMPUSES ARE BOMBARDED WITH MESSAGES FROM SOCIETY AT LARGE THAT GAMBLING ON INTERCOLLEGIATE SPORTING EVENTS IS LEGAL, LEGITIMATE, AND ENCOURAGED. EACH OF OUR CAMPUSES DEALS WITH THESE CHALLENGES IN WAYS THAT ARE APPROPRIATE TO THE CULTURE OF OUR INSTITUTIONS. AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA, FOR EXAMPLE, WE MAKE IT PERFECTLY CLEAR TO OUR STUDENT-ATHLETES THAT GAMBLING OR ANY CONTACT WITH PEOPLE INVOLVED IN GAMBLING IS UNACCEPTABLE AND MAY LEAD TO THEIR EXPULSION FROM THE UNIVERSITY. MOST OF OUR EFFORT IS FOCUSED ON EDUCATION. WE TALK TO OUR STUDENT-ATHLETES NOT ONLY ABOUT THE DANGERS OF GAMBLING OUTRIGHT, BUT OF THE DANGERS OF BEING ASSOCIATED WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE GAMBLING. WE MAKE SURE THEY UNDERSTAND THAT SUCH PEOPLE ARE LOOKING FOR INFORMATION THAT MAY INFLUENCE HOW BETS ARE PLACED - --INFORMATION ABOUT INJURIES, INFORMATION ABOUT COACHES, INFORMATION ABOUT ARGUMENTS BETWEEN TEAMMATES. THE MESSAGE THAT UGA STUDENT-ATHLETES RECEIVE IS THAT THERE IS NO SAFE WAY TO ASSOCIATE WITH GAMBLERS, AND THAT ANY SUSPICIONS SHOULD BE REPORTED IMMEDIATELY.

ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS WE HAVE INVOLVES BRINGING STUDENT-ATHLETES FROM OTHER SCHOOL WHO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN GAMBLING TO ATHENS TO SPEAK TO UGA ATHLETES. ALL OF US RECOGNIZE THE POWER OF PEER TESTIMONY, AND THESE YOUNG MEN HAVE CHILLING STORIES TO TELL ABOUT THE DAMAGING EFFECT THEIR INVOLVEMENT

WITH GAMBLING HAS HAD ON NOT ONLY THEIR ATHLETIC CAREERS, BUT THEIR LIVES.

WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT OUR ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT IS VIRTUALLY FREE OF GAMBLING. WE HAVE CAUGHT NO STUDENT-ATHLETE ENGAGED IN GAMBLING. IN OUR ANNUAL EXIT INTERVIEWS OF GRADUATING ATHLETES, ONLY ONE STUDENT HAS EVER SAID THERE IS A GAMBLING PROBLEM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA. BUT WE ARE NOT NAÏVE. WE KNOW THAT THERE ARE STUDENTS ON CAMPUS WHO PLACE BETS ON GAMES. WE ARE ALSO VERY MUCH AWARE OF THE CREEPING INFLUENCE OF THE CITY OF ATLANTA AND THE POTENTIAL INVOLVEMENT OF ORGANIZED CRIME. WE ARE, THEREFORE, EVER VIGILANT IN GUARDING AGAINST THIS PROBLEM.

IN ADDITION, THE NCAA – OF WHICH THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA IS A MEMBER – SUPPORTS A NUMBER OF PROGRAMS THAT ADDRESS THE SPORTS GAMBLING ISSUE.

IN CONCLUSION, I DO NOT WISH TO SUGGEST THAT ENACTMENT OF S. 718 WILL SOLVE ALL THE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH SPORTS WAGERING. INSTITUTIONS, COACHES, PLAYERS, STUDENTS AND PARENTS ALL HAVE IMPORTANT ROLES TO PLAY IN REVERSING THE CURRENT TRENDS. BUT I WANT TO BE VERY, VERY CLEAR: WHILE S. 718 WILL NOT SOLVE ALL THE PROBLEMS, IN MY OPINION IT WILL SOLVE THE CENTRAL ONE. BY AMENDING THE TED STEVENS OLYMPIC AND AMATEUR SPORTS ACT TO BAN BETTING ON HIGH SCHOOL, COLLEGE, AND OLYMPIC SPORTING EVENTS IN ALL FIFTY STATES, IT WILL END NEVADA'S LEGAL COLLEGE SPORTS BOOK FRANCHISE. THIS WILL MAKE IT CLEAR TO ONE AND ALL THAT BETTING ON A COLLEGIATE SPORTING EVENT IS AN ILLEGAL ACTIVITY. THE TIME HAS COME AT LONG LAST TO HONOR THE INTENT OF PASPA BY AMENDING THE STEVENS ACT TO END NEVADA'S PREFERENTIAL STATUS.

MR. CHAIRMAN, AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, I THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY IN FAVOR OF S. 718 AND I WISH YOU SMOOTH SAILING IN SECURING ITS PASSAGE.